



Corbett  
250



# SERMON

PREACHED BY

BISHOP MEADE

AT THE OPENING OF THE

Convention of the P. E. Church of Virginia,

IN THE CITY OF RICHMOND,

**In the Fifty-First Year of his Ministry, and the Thirty-  
Second of his Episcopate.**

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## S E R M O N .

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And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, how old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage.

GENESIS xlvii. 8-9.

“Man, that is born of a woman, hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery.” Such is the brief and touching funeral sermon which our Church pronounces over every child of man, as the body is laid in the grave, and earth cast on earth, ashes on ashes, dust on dust. The sermon is taken from the lips of the venerable patriarch of Uz. There is a striking resemblance between it and our text. Both of them seem to say, and only to say, few and sorrowful are the days of man upon earth. Thus limited in their meaning they declare a simple truism of all humanity. But, is there not a deeper and broader meaning to them, when coming from the lips of God’s ancient saints? So thought our fathers of the Reformation, who faithfully compared Scripture with Scripture, and thus learned the mind of the Lord and of his saints.

In the second of our honest homilies, written by the martyrs of the English Church, we have a discourse on “the misery of all mankind, and of his condemnation to death everlasting by his own sin,” in which the word misery is only another name for sin, and dust and ashes only the outward signs of inward corruption, and spiritual death. “We read,” it says, “how holy men and women, in the Old Testament,

did use sackcloth and cast dust and ashes upon their heads, when they bewailed their sinful living; that they, thereby, might declare to the whole world what an humble and lowly estimation they had of themselves, and how well they remembered their name and title aforesaid—their vile, corrupt, and frail nature—dust, earth, and ashes.”

Thus may we enter into the true spirit of the venerable father of the faithful, when he was almost afraid to offer up another prayer for the guilty Cities of the Plain, “Behold now I have taken it upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes!”—that is, a poor sinful being, who ought to be repenting, in dust and ashes, for my own transgressions. To understand it otherwise—that is—as referring only to the frail materials of the body, would be to play into the hands of the infidel, who denies that there is an immortal soul within. And when we consider how much more frequently and emphatically the word evil, as used in Scripture, is connected with the guilt and misery of sin, than with the mere sorrows of life, can we, for a moment, suppose that, in the words of our text, the patriarch only referred to the troubles which had attended his brief sojourn on earth, and thought not of the sins—those worst of all evils—by which he had often offended an holy God? How unlike would he have been to holy Job, who, when appearing, not before some Pharaoh of earth, but before the King of Kings, instead of mourning over his afflictions, says “Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand on my mouth.” How unlike the same, who said, “I have heard of thee, O God, by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” How different from David, the man after God’s own heart, who never appeared before God or man, though in the midst of severest trials, without the humblest acknowledgment of

his manifold transgressions, and who in his Psalms has left words of deepest penitence, for the use of God's saints to the end of the world. It has ever been our boast, in behalf of the Hebrew and Christian systems, that they alone, of all the religious and philosophical systems in the world, teach and exemplify the penitence which becomes the fallen race of man. Admissions of sin and some sacrifices for it, are indeed to be found in all others, but the deep bewailing of sin before God and the sacrifices of a broken spirit and contrite heart we seek for in vain. Moreover, to suppose the patriarch Jacob, in speaking of his past years, to have forgotten all God's mercies to him, as well as his sins against God, and merely to have dwelt upon the sorrowful passages of his life, were to charge him with ingratitude as well as self-righteousness. Among the sons of men, where shall we find one who, from his birth to the time of his appearing before Pharaoh, had been more highly blessed? The favorite of his parents, he had obtained both the birthright and the blessing. As he grew up to manhood God prospered him in all things. His flocks and his herds were multiplied above measure. He was also rich in lauds, silver and gold. His twelve sons became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. For a time, indeed, he was bereaved of one son, but only that that son might become more than a king in Egypt and make ready the richest part of the richest country upon earth for his father and brothers, when all the nations around were pining away with famine. And when old age came on, his sons were still living and all gathered around his death-bed to receive his last prophetic words. None had greater cause to say, "Surely mercy and goodness have followed me all the days of my life." But, in reviewing the past days of the years of his life—amounting to one hundred and thirty—had he none of the evils of sin to acknowledge, none of the deep corruption of our fallen



nature, and of the actual transgression, of that holy law which reaches down to the very thoughts and intents of the heart? Was he guilty of no sin, when co-operating with his mother in robbing an elder brother of his father's blessing, and thereby bringing on himself the enmity of that brother? Was there nothing wrong in multiplying wives unto himself, seeing that it was not so in the beginning, as our Lord declares? Was he not guilty in showing partiality to some of his children, thus provoking the envy and jealousy of the others, and tempting them to sin? Are we sure that he was as faithful as his grandfather Abraham in commanding his household after him, and in opposing, to the utmost, all approaches to idolatry in his own family and in those around him? Although still the friend of God, who did not disdain to be called the God of Jacob as well as of Abraham and Isaac, yet he was a sinner, though penitent and believing.

“For he was frail as you or I,  
And evil felt within;  
But when he felt it, heav'd a sigh,  
And loathed the thought of sin.”

Such is, I think, the spirit and meaning of that Scripture chosen for a text, and which I desire to apply, on this occasion to myself and hearers.

A few months since, and there ended the fiftieth year since I was permitted to enter on the sacred duties of the Gospel ministry; and since the fiftieth year is hallowed both in the sacred Scriptures, and in some of the celebrations of men, I have felt it a duty to consider myself as standing before the King of Kings, to answer the solemn question, “how old art thou?” I can only answer it according to the spirit and meaning just given—that is, in a deep sense of unworthiness and of gratitude for most unmerited mercies. If any should think that the

fact of having spent fifty years in the ministry must awake some other feeling than humility and thankfulness, let it be remembered that the length of the ministry is no true measure of its acceptableness to God or usefulness to man. Our Lord, instead of spending a thousand years upon earth, and by his holy example and faithful preaching, reforming the lives and manners of men, devoted only a few years to his active ministry; and while here delivered a parable, in which he who labored only one hour, received the same reward with those who had borne the heat and burthen of the day. If there be any who are tempted to estimate the efficacy of their ministry by the duration thereof, he would do well to remember how the patriarch of the flood warned an ungodly world for one hundred and twenty years, but in vain, and how his own posterity soon filled the purified earth with new abominations. Many a brief ministry has, by God's blessing, produced far more abundant fruits than a protracted one; and it has sometimes happened that God has extended a ministry, rather in judgment than in mercy. But even when the utmost is done, unless we not only call ourselves, but in the deep of our hearts feel ourselves to be most unprofitable servants, we are an offence unto God.

Let us then enter into judgment with ourselves this day. It has ever been a wise and pious custom, at the opening of each new year, or on the return of the day of our nativity, to look back on the past, and so to number our days, as to apply our hearts unto wisdom.

“’Tis greatly wise to meditate on our past hours,  
And ask them what report they bore to Heaven,  
And how they might have borne more welcome news.”

How often must we be covered with shame and confusion when considering the sins, in thought, word, or deed, of only

one year, nay, of only one month, or week, or day! What, then, should be the exercises of a soul, especially that of a minister of God, at the end of fifty years, in reviewing all the sins and short-comings of that long period! When we remember that “the thought of foolishness is sin” before God—that for every idle word God will call us into judgment—that every misspent moment and neglected opportunity are talents to be accounted for—that lukewarmness, especially, is most hateful to God—and how much less we have put forth of love and duty towards God and man than we ought to have done—and all this, too, for the space of fifty long years—what an accumulated load of guilt must rest upon us! Well may each one of us exclaim, “Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!” Surely God’s ministers, of all men upon earth, ought to be the most humble. The sins of their holy things—of their very prayers—of their most solemn performances—are, of themselves, enough to fill them with shame. When they remember that judgment is to begin at the house of God—in the very sanctuary—with his ministers—and that all their short-comings will be so many swift witnesses against them, how fearful the thought of that day! Well may they say :

“Yet, Holy Father, wild despair  
Chase from my laboring breast.”

What but hope, through that Saviour whom they have been ever offering to others, can sustain in such a review? And on the awful day, when all our sins shall pass, in one rapid moment, before us, what would be the condition of God’s ministers, but for those words, “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ, that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

But, brethren, as age, with its experience and recollections, is a talent which must not be buried, lest it rise up in condemnation, I shall be expected to speak some things as one who has passed his appointed time of three-score years and ten, and is rapidly moving on to that, whose "strength is only labor and sorrow," and which he neither expects nor desires to reach. When I go back to earlier years, and think of those with whom I entered life, I ask :

"Where is the world into which I was born?"

Where my schoolboy and college associates? Where the young men with whom I entered on the blessed task of preaching the glorious Gospel? If any remain, I can only say to them :

"O, my coevals, remnants of yourselves,  
Poor human ruins, tottering o'er the grave;"

and invite them to join with me in saying unto God :

"Our life's brief remnant all be thine,  
And when thy sure decree  
Bids us this fleeting breath resign,  
O, speed our souls to thee."

But it may be expected that I should follow the example of some, who, at the end of a quarter or half century of years, cast their eyes over the world, and, comparing the past with the present, see what progress has been made in all that is interesting to man. This I must not undertake; and need not, it having been done so often and so well by others far more competent to the task. Wonderful, indeed, have been the discoveries in arts and sciences during the last half century, especially in the latter part of it, which, while contributing something to the improvement and happiness of

man and the propagation of Christ's Kingdom upon earth, have also ministered, in different ways, to the sins and miseries of man—as, for instance, in the greater facilities for destructive warfare, and in the increased temptations to the violation of the Sabbath, by reason of easy, cheap and rapid locomotion. In one thing, however, we must all rejoice, viz : that amongst all the discoveries and inventions of the age there has been no change made or required in the religion which comes from Him “in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Our sacred book is still the same, while all the sacred books of other religions have been corrupted and mutilated. One portion of our blessed Bible is the very same as when the Saviour and his inspired Apostles declared it to be infallible truth from Heaven, and the other just what the Apostles and Evangelists left with the Church. Nor have we made any new discoveries as to the meaning of its great facts and doctrines. They are still understood as the Apostles, Fathers and Reformers held them. All the discoveries in science, all the researches into languages, all the examination of ancient records, whether on the surface of the earth or under the ruins of ancient cities and temples, only serve to confirm the long-received interpretations of the Oracles of God. With this remark, I leave the Old World and other lands, and now confine myself almost entirely to some things relating to the Church and State of Virginia, especially during the last half century, with which I may be justly supposed to be better acquainted.

From its geographical position and early settlement, Virginia has ever held an interesting position among the States of our Confederacy. Though the colony was planted at a time when the life and power of Protestantism was somewhat abating in our mother country and Church, still, some of the noblest spirits of England were actively engaged in the enterprise ;

and never was a colony settled under more religious auspices than was that at Jamestown. The Puritan establishment of New England was not stricter in its discipline, or more devotional in its habits, than was the Virginia settlement during the first years of its existence. Afterwards it partook of the declining character of the English Church and people, as to morals and religion, and towards the period of the Revolution, the Episcopal Church fell into general disrepute, and at the close of the war, ceased to be the religious establishment of Virginia.

Although our design is only to speak of the last half century, yet we must make one remark, as to a certain period, preceding and following after the Revolution, and reaching down to the commencement of our ministerial observations and recollections. There are those who fondly look back to these as the golden, or, at least, the silver age of our country, and regard our own as the brazen or the iron. Poets and others have, in all ages, been prone to this, and there has been more or less of truth in their comparisons and complaints. Some there were who undervalued the prosperous days of Israel, in the time of Solomon, and wished for a return of former days—the troublous ones of their forefathers. To such Solomon administers the following rebuke: “Say not thou what is the cause that the former days were better than these, for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.”\* My researches, of late years, have led me to enquire and learn much concerning our forefathers in Virginia, in their connexion with both Church and State, and to know, that in both, there was no little of selfishness, corruption, and intrigue; though truth requires me to confess my fears, that, in the latter department, there is far more to be deplored in the politicians of the present day. The Revolution called forth into

full exercise some of the noblest virtues of the noblest spirits that ever adorned the annals of history. God grant that many such may be raised up for the trying times which are before us. In one other respect, also, we may well desire a return to former days. Our own Revolution and that of France following soon after, each throwing off allegiance to power unduly exercised, did not stop where they should have done, but, under the guidance of infidelity, proceeded to the overthrow of all authority—even to that of parents, teachers of youth, and civil rulers—asserting dangerous rights for all, of every age and condition. Nor have we, to this day, recovered from its effects. There is a spirit of independence and insubordination in the domestic and social circle, and, among all ranks, which is one of the most fearful signs of our times, and which, if not arrested, must bring down the heaviest calamities on our land; perhaps some tyrant king or kings whom God may give us, in wrath, to punish and subdue this unruly evil.

But, in other respects, during the period to which I allude, there were evils, even among the higher classes, more general than at the present, though we have many to mourn over, even now. The habits of the gentlemen were very bad. Swearing, drinking, gambling, horse-racing, cock-fighting prevailed to a most fearful extent, and the fruits of the same were seen, not merely in the utter ruin and untimely deaths of numbers of the gentlemen of all ages, but in the impoverishment and prostration of many of the first families of the State. After the Revolution, infidelity became rife throughout Virginia, especially among the upper and the more educated classes. I well remember how, in every young man coming from school and college, I was prepared to meet with an infidel or a scoffer. Even those gentlemen who advocated Christianity as the religion of their fathers, and in opposition to the infidel and political principles of France, evinced

but little of its transforming power in their lives. The ordinances of religion were sadly neglected. Fifty years ago and the communicants of our Church might have been numbered by hundreds, and these irregular in their attendance. It is true, that before and during the Revolutionary war, when contending against fearful odds, a spirit of humble dependence on God seemed to possess the hearts of our people; and our patriotic fathers engaged in the contest with an appeal to the God of Hosts, while the people assembled in the Churches and offered up their prayers. It is true, also, that the members of our great Congress set a good example, and not only proclaimed solemn fasts, and issued wholesome warnings against all kinds of vices and follies, but had daily prayers offered up by the first and best ministers of religion. But here honest truth bids us acknowledge, that when the great object was attained, and Heaven had freed us from a foreign yoke, and our great men were assembled to organize the Government, the proposition to invoke the aid of Heaven, though made and advocated by a Franklin, found scarce any to support it, and that which would now be regarded as a foul reproach on our national assembly, was resolved on, viz: That no minister of God should be called on to invoke his guidance and blessing. Who can say that this sin of our fathers, amongst others, is not, even now, visited on the third and fourth generation of their children, in the present unhappy condition of our country? And do we not deserve the judgment of Him, whose very existence is not recognized in that instrument of which we have been so proud, as the bond of union to our wide-spread territories?

Surely we have cause for thankfulness, that, in many respects, present days are better than former days, in relation to our whole land, as in the increase of religious knowledge, through the multiplication of good books, especially the Holy



Scriptures, the establishment of Sunday-schools, of missionary and other societies for promoting the kingdom of God upon earth. In relation to our own Church in Virginia, have we not cause for gratitude, that our few hundred communicants have become, at the least, as many thousands; that instead of a few faint and discouraged ministers—scarce pursuing—we have more than an hundred and twenty, who, we trust, may, for piety, zeal, and learning, compare with an equal number, in any part of the Church of God; that whereas forty years since we had only one professor and one student, in order to a supply for our pulpits, and without a home for either, we had, a few weeks since, more than seventy, under three regular professors, with others assisting; that we have a large and interesting group of noble buildings, which overlook the town in which we were this day to have met, furnishing every accommodation that could be desired; that instead of a few old mouldering Churches, some of them the common habitation of every beast of the field and fowl of the air, we have now nearly two hundred new or well repaired old ones for the worship of God, according to our venerable forms? Is it not matter for rejoicing, that whereas, for many years after other States had filled their Episcopacy, Virginia was unable to raise the means of sending her Bishop elect for consecration to the mother country, she is now willing and able to support two, and affords them abundant employ through the year? Is it not still more a subject for great rejoicing, that instead of being, as formerly, dependent for a scanty supply of defective ministers from a foreign land, we now have two Bishops and a goodly number of other ministers, who have gone from our Seminary to carry the blessed Gospel to the heathen? And, once more, have we not cause for rejoicing, that, whereas, in the year 1808, our General Convention, then assembled in the city of Baltimore, placed on its record the

sad apprehension that the ancient Church of Virginia was too far gone to hope for its recovery ; that, in the year 1859, the Bishops, clergy and laity from more than thirty States and Dioceses gathered together in this our own Capital, to rejoice with us over the abundant grace of God which had given life to the dead ?

But while we have thus cause to thank God for the past and take courage for the future, must we not also, with a deep emphasis, say with Jacob, “few and evil have been the days” of the Church of Virginia. Her resuscitated life commenced with the half century now closing, but what cause for humiliation has she, at thought of the little she has done, by comparison with the much she might have done, during those fifty years, by the blessing of God on the diligent and energetic use of all the talents committed to her. In less than that time, the little grain of mustard which was dropped in Judea, had nearly covered the earth with her wide-spread branches. The twelve fishermen had grown into a great army of preachers who had carried the banner of the Cross into all the world. And what have we done ? Few though we were, how have we fought for the cause of that God who oft-times prefers to conquer by few than by many—with Gideon and his three hundred, rather than with Gideon and ten thousand—with twelve unlearned fishermen, rather than a thousand Rabbies. If all the families which still adhered to the fallen fortunes of the Church of Virginia had put forth all their zeal and used all their means, in promoting its revival, how much sooner and more completely might it have been effected ? If parents had earnestly coveted for their sons that highest of all honors, a call to the sacred ministry, how many more might have given themselves to the sacred work, and been ready to fill those more numerous Churches built or repaired by the silver and gold of the rich. How much more rapidly might our

houses on the Seminary Hill have risen up, and how many more Bishops and other ministers been sent forth through our own and other lands? Had a more faithful use of prayer and the word been made, might not one uninterrupted revival of true religion have been going on, during these fifty years, drawing numbers of all classes into our communion. And, especially, had all ministers, masters and mistresses made full trial of their influence and ministry with the hundreds of thousands in bondage to them, who can doubt but that a great blessing from the Lord would have come down upon them and that great numbers of these—the poor of our Church and State—would have been added to it of such as shall be saved. What ministers of God, what parents, what masters and mistresses but must feel self-condemned at thought of the little done by them in these various relations, by comparison with that which might have been done?

As members of the Church, which ought to be “the blessed company of all faithful people,” have we been God’s “peculiar people zealous of good works,” “the salt of the earth, the light of the world,” “renouncing the Devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world and all the sinful lusts of the flesh.” Do Christian professors, in the decorations of their persons, the furniture of their houses, their equipage and entertainments, walk worthy of their high vocation? What would not the needless and sinful extravagance of the members of our Church in these things, during the last half century, have done for the Kingdom of God? Evil are the days in which we live, as to such things. Economy and self-denial, for the Lord’s sake, are almost exploded graces. Worldliness, in various forms, has been increasing upon us for many years, and has strong possession, vain amusements and intemperance, in many things, have brought reproach upon the Church of God in all her borders. The

difference between many of the professed followers of Christ and of the world is no more to be seen. They are not only in the world, but of the world. Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, are not ashamed to kneel around the table of the Lord, and make the most false declarations of love and obedience to him, and of renunciation of all that is offensive to him. These things, my brethren, ought not so to be.

And now, if I may be permitted to close with some personal reflections, I would say, that in reviewing my life, since entering the ministry, I can truly say, that not a day, or waking hour, has been so spent, that the word evil may not be justly applied to it, because so largely partaking of sin. I know that I have never performed one single act without some sin intermingling with it, either as to the motive or manner; not doing all to the glory of God, but allowing the desire of human praise to get into the heart and dwell there. Thus has "my sin been ever before me," and when my eye has caught some near glimpse of God, I have said "I abhor myself," feeling "that no clean thing can come out of such an unclean one." When I have read that God "charges even his angels with folly," how often, and from the deep of my heart, have I exclaimed with David, "O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee." Thus do I declare my doctrine and experience as to human depravity. It has ever been a source of shame to me, that so many of my friends and brethren were conscious and observant of my infirmities, and the more so, because they have dealt so forbearingly and kindly toward them. Had I these fifty years to live over again, I see many things to be amended, and would fain hope that I should be enabled so to do; and yet I would not ask or wish such a repetition, lest even greater dishonor come through me to the sacred cause. As already declared, I have now gone beyond my three-score years and ten, and have no

desire or expectation of reaching that period when "age is nothing but labor and sorrow," and "the grasshopper might be a burthen." At present I have cause to be thankful for a most unexpected share of health—though but little strength is connected with it, my eyes having become dim, and my natural force much abated. With such as I have, and as long as it lasts, I desire to serve my Lord and master, and my poor fellow-sinners, hoping that in some small degree, "For me to live is Christ," though "to die would be gain." The same kind allowance will, I trust, still be made for my imperfections, and if in the course of that brief remnant of life which may yet remain, my understanding (such as it is) should fail, my friends and brethren will remember the injunction to children, in behalf of a declining father, "If his understanding fail, have patience with him and despise him not."\*

But while, with humility and shame looking back on the sins and neglects of the past, I must not omit, what I am sure the patriarch felt in his heart, special gratitude for special favors and honors from God and man. While the office of a Bishop, by reason of its many cares and responsibilities, has been a heavy burthen to many, I have indeed found it, both in its lower and higher grade, "a good thing." Some painful cares I have had; some offences given, which I could wish to have avoided; some old friends in a measure alienated, whom I would have retained nearest to my heart; some enemies made, whose friendship I desired; some censure incurred, which I would gladly have avoided, if it could have been done with a good conscience; still, such has been the favor and kindness experienced, that "my cup has run over." Such has been the honor received from my brethren, and the hospitality from the members and families of the Church, that my visits, though

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\* Ecclesiasticus iii. 13.

sometimes attended with exhaustion, have been delightful recreations, while the sacred duties of the Episcopal office have been high and delightful privileges. On the heads of hundreds have I laid my hands in ordination, on thousands in baptism and confirmation, and to more numerous thousands have I administered the memorials of the dying love of our Lord; besides, for many years, the almost daily privilege of preaching the glorious Gospel to perishing sinners. In all these ways I have felt that a sacred relation was established with them to whom I ministered. I trust also that I have been thus drawn nearer myself to the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls above; and O may He, one day lay his hands on my own head, confirming all my hopes, admitting me to the fellowship of the first-born above, and allowing me to partake anew with Him and them, in some ineffable manner, the Supper of the Lord, in the Church triumphant above.

Would to God that I could thus conclude. Mingled emotions have attended our brief review of the last half century; but what if the veil could be raised which now shrouds in darkness the history of our country for the next fifty years, should the world itself continue thus long, who might not shrink back from the awful sight? O the divisions, the wars, the miseries which may make up that history, the mere beginning of which is now before our eyes and at our doors. God, in mercy, hides from us the sight of garments rolled in blood, of fields strewn with mangled bodies, of proud cities crumbled into heaps of ruin, of fertile valleys become desolations, of republics and kingdoms rising and falling and being no more forever. Such has been the history of nations once prosperous like our own. Such may be the end of our own, unless the Prince of Peace shall speedily come down and establish that kingdom which is to be for ever and ever. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

## A P P E N D I X .

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### N O T E S .

#### I.—*On Intemperance and other vices in old Virginia.*

In evidence of the use of strong drink about the time of the Revolution, let me refer to the fact that the day after the surrender of Cornwallis, even the great and good Washington issued an order that a double allowance of spirit should be dealt out to each soldier. What the usual allowance was, I know not. To this, let me add, that in my researches into the history of the old ministers of the Episcopal Church in Virginia, I found it was spoken of in praise of one of them that he had never been known to be intoxicated but once, and that was when the news of the capture of Cornwallis reached him, and in excuse for that, it was alleged that everybody got drunk on that occasion. Of course, we received that with all due allowance for exaggeration. That the clergy at that time, and long before, were in many instances liable to the charge of occasional intemperance, is also evident from the fact that in the application from Vestries and individuals to the Bishop of London for a minister, nothing was more common than to specify that he be a sober man. This also came under my observation from the examination of various documents. One of these documents specified the circumstances and signs by which the intemperance of a clergyman was to be determined. The evil practice prevailed to a great extent in England during the period in which it dishonored Virginia. Nor was

New England exempt from intemperance even among the clergy. Although Col. Byrd, in his Westover Manuscripts, in the year 1733, speaks of the people of New England as superior in their habits to those of Virginia, yet the time came when a sad change took place, as to the temperance of both clergy and laity. The Rev. Robert Sample, in his history of the Baptists in Virginia, tells us also of a great declension in the morals of both ministers and people immediately after the Revolution, intemperance forming a prominent feature in it. As to swearing, it was so prevalent among the higher circles in Virginia, and among some professing to be members of the Church, that Commissary Blair, in preaching to his congregation in Williamsburg, where the first persons in Virginia resided, thus speaks: "I know of no vice that brings more scandal to our Church. The Church may be in danger from many enemies, but perhaps she is not in so much danger from any as from the great number of profane persons that pretend to be of her." This habit of swearing continued to prevail from the time of Commissary Blair to long after my entrance on the ministry, and could with difficulty be restrained in the presence of either ministers or ladies. Card-playing was general amongst ladies and gentlemen, ministers and people, for amusement and gain, to the ruin of thousands of individuals and families. Horse-racing was so common among the first families that numbers of the rich gentlemen had training race-courses on their estates, the sites or traces of which are, in many instances, pointed out to this day on plantations long since passed into other hands. The still lower practice of cock-fighting also dishonored some of the higher gentry of Virginia. The pedigrees of their chickens, as well as horses, were carefully kept. In a diary of one of the old clergy it is written that he called to see one of the leading characters of Virginia—a vestryman and sup-



porter, perhaps member of the Church—but found that he had gone to another county, some distance off, to a cock-fight.

## II.—*On the Spirit of Insubordination.*

In nothing is this spirit of insubordination more manifest than in children toward their parents and pupils toward their teachers. Our Catechism enjoins each of us “to love, honor and succor our father and mother; to honor and obey the civil authority; to submit ourselves to all our governors, teachers, spiritual masters and pastors; to order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters;” but how little is this obeyed, either in the spirit or letter. One of our old clergy, who had proved his fitness for the instruction and government of youth before the Revolution, was solicited to continue the same office afterwards, but positively refused, saying that it was difficult enough to manage boys before the Revolution, but impossible to do it aright afterwards. Seeing so much of this spirit in Virginia, I was once fearful that it was peculiar to our State, but on travelling through New England—the land of steady habits—many years since, I found the same complaint wherever I went as to the sad change which was going on in this respect. Visiting old England soon after, where the very existence of the country so much depends upon the culture of a spirit of subordination, I found, indeed, that, by comparison with our own country, there was a subdued and reverential spirit and manner on the part of children, and servants, and pupils, and the young, and all citizens, towards those who were older and superior; but still there was complaint of the gradual rising of a rebellious spirit which portended evil to all their institutions. It is not wonderful that they entertain apprehensions from the spirit of Young America.

### III.—*On the Piety of the first Congress.*

During the Revolution, Congress, by a vote of nearly three-fourths, passed a resolution calling upon all the States to take the most effectual measures for the encouragement of religion and good morals, and especially “for suppressing of theatrical entertainments, horse-racing, gaming, and such other diversions as are productive of idleness, dissipation, and a general depravity of manners.” How faithfully they all complied with their own recommendation, when the war was over, I am unable to say.

### IV.—*On the Patriotism of the Laity and Clergy of Virginia.*

That there was a large amount of patriotism, not only among the laity, but also among the clergy of Virginia, is evident from many facts which have come under my notice while investigating the history of the Church of Virginia. Many sermons preached in behalf of the Revolution have been placed in my hands, which breathe a most devoted attachment to the rights of the American States. Mr. Jefferson declares that the effect of the sermons preached throughout the State by the Episcopal clergy, at the call of the Burgesses, in 1774, was like an electric shock. It has been most falsely supposed that very many, if not most of the Episcopal clergy, were induced, by the offer of the King’s bounty of fifty pounds sterling, or two hundred and fifty dollars, to abandon the Commonwealth and return to England. I have paid special attention to this subject, and, from reliable documents, am satisfied that not more than three or four of the nearly one hundred ministers in Virginia availed themselves of the offer.

V.—*Extract from Bishop MEADE'S Address to the Episcopal Convention in Richmond, on the State of the Country.*

Having thus presented a statement of those things pertaining to our Diocese which the canon requires of me, I now ask your attention to a few remarks concerning the present unhappy condition of our State and Country.

My brethren and friends will bear me witness how carefully I have ever avoided, in all my communications, the least reference to anything partaking of a political character, and how I have earnestly warned my younger brethren against the danger of injuring the effect of their sacred ministry, by engaging in discussions which are so apt to disturb the peace of society. But in the present circumstances of our country the cause of religion is so deeply involved, that I feel not only justified, but constrained to offer a few remarks for your consideration.

It has pleased God to permit a great calamity to come upon us. Our whole country is preparing for war. Our own State, after failing in her earnest effort for the promotion of peace, is, perhaps, more actively engaged in all needful measures for maintaining the position which she has, after much consideration, deliberately assumed, than any portion of the land.

A deeper and more honest conviction that if war should actually come upon us, it will be on our part one of self-defence, and, therefore, justifiable before God, seldom, if ever, animated the breasts of those who appealed to arms. From this consideration, and from my knowledge of the character of our people, I believe that the object sought for will be most perseveringly pursued, whatever sacrifice of life and comfort and treasure may be required. Nor do I entertain any doubt as to the final result, though I shudder at the thought of what

may intervene before that result is secured. May God, in great mercy and with His mighty power, interpose and grant us speedy peace, instead of protracted war! But can it be, that at this period of the world, when so many prayers are offered up for the establishment of Christ's kingdom in all the earth, and such high hopes are entertained that the zealous efforts put forth will be successful, and our country be one of the most effective and honored instruments for producing the same, that the great work shall be arrested by such a fratricidal war as that which is now so seriously threatened? Is there not room enough for us all to dwell together in peace in this widely extended country, so large a portion of which is yet unsettled, and may not be until the world that now is shall be no more? The families or nations which sprung from two venerable patriarchs of old, could find room enough in the little pent-up land of Judea to live in peace, by going the one to one hand and the other to the opposite. At a later period, when Israel and Judah separated, and the latter having the city and temple in possession, and the supremacy, according to prophecy, was preparing to go up against the former and reduce the people to submission, and bring them back to union, the Lord himself came down and forbade it, saying: "*Thou shalt not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel. Return every man to his house, for this thing is of me.*" And they hearkened unto the Lord, and ever after the history of the two kingdoms is written in the same sacred volume, in which are also recorded the evidences of God's favor to both, and though sometimes at controversy, yet how often were they found side by side defending the ancient boundaries of Judea against surrounding nations. God grant that our country may learn a lesson from this sacred narrative. Let none think that I am unmindful of law and order, and of the blessings of Union. I was trained in a different school.

I have clung with tenacity to the hope of preserving the Union to the last moment. If I know my own heart, could the sacrifice of the poor remnant of my life have contributed in any degree to its maintenance, such sacrifice would have been cheerfully made. But the developments of public feeling and the course of our rulers have brought me slowly, reluctantly, sorrowfully, yet most decidedly, to the painful conviction, that notwithstanding attendant dangers and evils, we shall consult the welfare and happiness of the whole land by separation. And who can desire to retain a Union which has now become so hateful, and by the application of armed force, which, if successful, would make it ten times more hateful, and soon lead to the repetition of the same bloody contests?

I trust, therefore, that the present actual separation of so many and such important portions of our country may take place without further collision, which might greatly hinder the establishment of the most friendly and intimate relations which can consist with separate establishments. I trust that our friends at a distance, and now in opposition to us, will most seriously review their judgment, and inquire whether the evils resulting from a war to sustain their wishes and opinions as to a single Confederacy, will not far exceed those apprehended from the establishment of a second—an event far more certain than the result of the American Revolution at the time of its occurrence.

In connection with this civil and geographical separation in our country, and almost necessarily resulting from it, the subject of some change of the ecclesiastical relations of our Diocese must come under consideration. There is a general and strong desire, I believe, to retain as much as possible of our past and present happy intercourse with those from whom we shall be, in other matters, more divided. A meeting is already proposed for this purpose in one of the seceded States,

whose plans, so far as de  
ration of this body at its present

I cannot conclude without expressing the  
that the ministers and members of our Church, and  
citizens of our State, who are so deeply interested in the  
sent contest, may conduct it in the most elevated and Chri  
tian spirit, rising above uncharitable and indiscriminate  
imputations on all who are opposed. Many there are equally  
sincere on both sides, as there ever have been in all the wars  
and controversies that have been waged upon earth; though  
it does not follow that all have the same grounds of justice  
and truth on which to base their warfare.

It was the maxim of an ancient sage that we should always  
treat our friends as those who might one day be our enemies,  
and to treat our enemies as those who may one day be our  
friends. While abhorring, as I am sure we all do, the former  
part of this cold-hearted maxim, let us cherish and adopt the  
latter, so congenial with the spirit of our holy religion. The  
thought of even a partial separation from those who have  
long been so dear to me is anguish to my soul. But there is  
a union of heart in our common faith and hope which can  
never be broken. The Church in Virginia has more dear  
friends and generous patrons amongst those who are on the  
opposite side of this painful controversy than any other, and  
feels most deeply the unhappy position in which we are placed.

As our State has, to its high praise, endeavored to avert the  
evils now threatened, so may our Church, and all the others  
in Virginia, by prayer and the exercise of true charity, en  
deavor to diminish that large amount of prejudice and ill-will  
which so unhappily abounds in our land.

Let me, in conclusion, commend to your special prayers all  
those who have now devoted themselves to the defence of our  
State. From personal knowledge of many of them, and from

I have clung with tenacity to the ready, I believe, a large Union to the last moment. ~~the~~ genuine piety to be found the sacrifice ~~to~~ rejoice to learn that in many companies not in ~~an~~ the services of chaplains and other ministers earnestly ~~be~~ at for, but social prayer meetings held among themselves. Our own Church has a very large proportion of communicants among the officers of our army, and not a few among the soldiers. Let us pray that grace may be given them to be faithful soldiers of the Cross, as well as valiant and successful defenders of the State.

If all of us do our part faithfully and according to the principles of our holy religion, we may confidently leave the issue to God, who will overrule all for good.

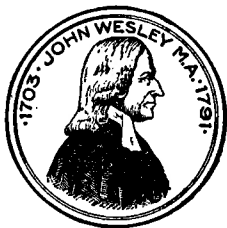
The reading of this report was followed by the appointment of a committee, whose report having been subsequently submitted, was approved by a unanimous vote of the Convention, as follows :

The special committee to whom so much of the Bishop's Address as relates to the present political and ecclesiastical condition of our affairs was referred, unanimously report the following resolutions for adoption by the Convention :

1. *Resolved*, That this Convention, having heard with deep interest the true and timely statements of our venerable Diocesan in reference to the present political and ecclesiastical condition of our affairs, cordially concur in the views presented, and sympathize fully in the kind and Christian spirit in which they are so wisely declared.

2. *Resolved*, That a committee, consisting of the two Bishops, with three clerical and three lay members, be appointed as a provisional committee to act, during the recess of the Convention, in all matters connected with our relations to other dioceses, and also to serve as delegates in any Convention which may be agreed upon by other similarly situated dioceses. All the proceedings of this committee to be reported for the approval of the Convention of the Diocese of Virginia.

J. JOHNS,	W. SPARROW,	J. GRAMMAR,	} Com.
THOS. S. GHOLSON,	JAMES GALT,	R. H. CUNNINGHAM,	



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PREACHED BY

BISHOP MEADE

AT THE OPENING OF THE

Convention of the P. E. Church of Virginia,

IN THE CITY OF RICHMOND,

**In the Fifty-First Year of his Ministry, and the Thirty-  
Second of his Episcopate.**

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE CONVENTION.

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1861.

